

MEMO OF INTERVIEW OF JACK L. PUTERBAUGH BY LARRY HAAPANEN CONDUCTED ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1970, AT 4514 WESTBROOK LANE, KENSINGTON, MARYLAND.

BACKGROUND:

In July 1970, I discovered in the March 1965 edition of the Congressional Directory the following entry in the section on the Agriculture Department: "Food Trades Staff. - Jacob L. Puterbaugh, 4514 Westbrook Lane, Kensington, Md., 20795." (p. 523)

Having already learned that Jack Puterbaugh, one of the occupants of the pilot car in President Kennedy's Dallas motorcade, lived at that address in Kensington, this was my first indication that Puterbaugh had worked for the Agriculture Department. I subsequently wrote to the Agriculture Department, asking for any biographical information they might have for release on Puterbaugh. While I received no written reply, on August 18, 1970, Puterbaugh attempted to call me from Washington, D.C. I received his message to call him, and the following day reached him at his Washington number, which, it turned out, belonged to an office of the Agriculture Department. I explained to Puterbaugh my interest in the assassination and my desire to talk to him, and he invited me to see him at his home in Kensington, Md. He said that no one, other than one writer who was doing some research on Jerry Bruno, had ever interviewed him about the assassination.

I talked to Puterbaugh at his home from about 7:30 to 9:30 PM, Sept. 5, 1970. He appears to be in his mid-40s, about 6'1" tall, heavy build, dark haired with long, heavy sideburns greying at the temples. He is married and has three children.

DETAILS:

PUTERBAUGH said that he was head of the Minnesota Liquor Commission for about four years, and that during that time he handled security arrangements for JOHN F. KENNEDY's 1960 campaign in Minnesota. He said he subsequently went to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and was close to Agriculture Secretary OROVILLE FREEMAN, former Governor of Minnesota. He said that in September 1963 he did advance work for President KENNEDY's visit to Duluth, Minnesota.

PUTERBAUGH said that he was asked to do advance work for President KENNEDY's Dallas visit by TOM HUGHES, of FREEMAN's office. He said his main job was to "divvy up tickets" for the Dallas luncheon, as well as to handle arrangements for the airport reception. He said he was accompanied to Dallas by Special Agent LAWSON of the Secret Service and Mr. BALES of the White House Communications Agency.

PUTERBAUGH said that his first stop in Dallas (after his arrival there on November 12, 1963) was the Dallas Times Herald, the newspaper "less critical" of President KENNEDY. He said he subsequently met with representatives of the Dallas Citizens Council (which he referred to, facetiously, as the "White Citizens Council"), which was to pick up the tab for the luncheon honoring the President. He said the Citizens Council wanted to have a small crowd at the luncheon.

PUTERBAUGH said STANLEY MARCUS was hesitant about President KENNEDY's visit because of what had happened during ADLAI STEVENSON's visit to Dallas.

PUTERBAUGH said that JERRY BRUNO, advance man for the Democratic National Committee, had been in Dallas earlier, probably for less than a day. He said that BRUNO kept calling him on the phone and bothering him until he finally hung up on BRUNO, telling him not to call back until he was ready to apologize.

PUTERBAUGH said that beginning on November 17, BETTY HARRIS helped him with arrangements. He said that she was probably detailed to help by JERRY BRUNO or BILL MOYERS. He said that she had worked with SAM BLOOM of the Citizens Council.

PUTERBAUGH said that the Trade Mart was chosen for the luncheon because it offered better security and was better situated in relation to Love Field than the alternative sites. He said that he had no part in the actual selection of the site for the luncheon. (NOTE: According to JAMES ROWLEY, Chief of the Secret Service, Special Agent LAWSON was informed on November 14 by PUTERBAUGH that the luncheon would be held at the Trade Mart. Cf. 18 H 715.)

PUTERBAUGH said that Dallas labor people were not satisfied with the way they were included in the reception at Love Field and as a result they boycotted the reception. He said that BRAXTON BRYANT, a candidate for Congress, showed up at Love Field with an old lady in a wheel chair, and that she was greeted by President KENNEDY following the President's arrival.

PUTERBAUGH said that he told the Citizens Council that there was to be no presentation of gifts to President KENNEDY, but that they went ahead and got two saddles and a program of the last presidential visit to Dallas, and planned to present them to the President at the luncheon.

PUTERBAUGH mentioned that BILL MOYERS came to Dallas on the Sunday preceding November 22.

PUTERBAUGH said that when the motorcade prepared to leave Love Field, he was placed in the pilot car by Special Agent LAWSON. He said that he sat on the right hand side in the back seat, and that he didn't know the other occupants of the car. He said that he had been told by LAWSON that there would be a total of four people in the car, but that it turned out that there were five.

PUTERBAUGH said that the pilot car preceded the rest of the motorcade by 4-5 blocks. He said that he remembers the friendly crowds along the route, particularly some nuns with a group of school children. He said that he remembers no stops along the route prior to the stop made on the expressway. He said that he does recall noticing the Texas School Book Depository and wondering, in jest, "is that where they burn books?" He also remembers going under the Triple Underpass, and figuring that the motorcade was roughly on time.

PUTERBAUGH said that the first radio transmission he heard in the pilot car following the assassination was a call to "send all available policemen to the Triple Underpass area." He said that at first he thought someone might have thrown a tomato or something of that sort at the motorcade, but then a call on the radio came asking Parkland to prepare for an emergency.

PUTERBAUGH said that the pilot car stopped on the expressway, then fell in behind the car containing Mayor CABELL and Congressman ROBERTS. He said that he doesn't recall any radio transmissions being made from the pilot car while it was stopped.

PUTERBAUGH said that the pilot car stopped about 50 feet from the presidential limousine at Parkland, and that he got out and tried to keep back unauthorized people. He said that he then got back into the pilot car, and accompanied Special Agent FORREST SORRELS back to Dealy Plaza, the siren going.

PUTERBAUGH said that he stayed in Dealy Plaza for about 5 minutes, and then walked to the Sheraton Hotel, where he had been staying while in Dallas. He said that he called his boss in the Agriculture Department, JOHN BROWN, and told him that things were more serious than KENNEDY being merely wounded. He said he had heard someone say at Parkland that it looked very bad for the President, and had assumed that KENNEDY had been killed.

PUTERBAUGH said that he doesn't remember anything about the Secret Service agents in the front seat of the presidential limousine as it passed, but does recall seeing Mrs. KENNEDY's pink dress, and someone on the back of the limousine. He also remembers two men standing up in the Secret Service follow-up car as it passed. He said that the presidential limousine definitely went straight to Parkland. He said that he knows nothing of any driver switch during the motorcade.

PUTERBAUGH said that he got a cab from the hotel to Love Field, and arranged for pick-up of Special Agent LAWSON's baggage. He said that while at LOVE FIELD, he saw one of the two Secret Service agents that had flown into Dallas with the presidential limousine beating on the trunk of a car with an ax, trying to get at something in the trunk. He said he had dinner with the two agents following their arrival in Dallas with the limousine.

(NOTE: The two agents were Special Agents HICKEY and KINNEY. Cf. 17 H 625.)

PUTERBAUGH said that he noted that Special Agent LAWSON neither smoked nor drank, but he did not observe the drinking habits of the other Secret Service agents.

PUTERBAUGH said he has some doubts about the validity of the Warren Commission's findings, since "the ballistics stuff doesn't add up." He said that he read some of the earlier books about the assassination, but that going to school during the past 3 years has not left him time to do any more reading on the subject. He said that his experiences with the FBI--as head of the Minnesota Liquor Commission and in working for the Department of Agriculture on the Billie Sol Estes case--has given him doubts about the FBI's ability to satisfactorily investigate the assassination.

I showed PUTERBAUGH several photos and slides taken at Love Field and in Dealy Plaza on November 22, 1963. He was unable to identify any of the persons shown in these views.